

Saipan Tribune

CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

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WEDNESDAY MARCH 10, 2004

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I N S I D E

See NORITA on Page 8

See HOUSE on Page 8

Local Milestones

SAIPANCELL
CMYK

CARS UNLIMITED


CENTURY TRAVEL




WEATHER FORECAST

PICTURE TIME: 1:00 AM., MARCH 9, 2004
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.


Fresh to strong trade winds across much of Micronesia converging into lighter winds near the Equator are producing scattered showers between the Equator and 8n from 130e to 153 and between the Equator and 6n from 160e to 180. A cold front stretches from 25n161e to 20n146e and continues as a shear line to 19n130e. Low- and mid-level clouds...light rain and showers associated this feature extend up to 200 miles north of the boundary. Trade wind convergence south of the cold front/shear line is producing low clouds and showers between 12n and 18n from 132e to 150e. This area includes the Mariana Islands.




SAIPAN AND TINIAN
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 87. Lows near 76.




GUAM AND ROTA
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 mph. Highs near 87. Lows near 76.




PALAU
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.




POHNPEI
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15 kt.



YAP AND ULITHI
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.






















KOSRAE
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: East at 10-15 kt.



CHUUK
Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
Winds: Northeast at 15-20 kt.



MAJURO
Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.
Winds: East at 15-20 kt.

CITY	FORECAST	HIGH	LOW
 Auckland	Sunny	71F (22C)	60F (16C)
 Beijing	Sunny	65F (18C)	48F (9C)
 Hong Kong	Sunny	74F (23C)	61F (16C)
 Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	82F (28C)	68F (20C)
 London, England	Sunny	45F (7C)	30F (-1C)
 Los Angeles	Sunny	79F (26C)	59F (15C)
 Manila	Partly Cloudy	88F (31C)	73F (23C)
 Melbourne	Sunny	75F (24C)	59F (15C)
 Miami	Partly Cloudy	72F (22C)	54F (12C)
 New York City	Cloudy	40F (4C)	34F (1C)
 Osaka	Partly Cloudy	37F (3C)	25F (-4C)
 Paris	Partly Cloudy	38F (3C)	25F (-4C)
 Pusan	Partly Cloudy	53F (12C)	39F (4C)
 Rome	Cloudy	49F (9C)	30F (-1C)
 Salem, Oregon	Partly Cloudy	60F (16C)	40F (4C)
 San Francisco	Sunny	68F (20C)	52F (11C)
 Seoul	Partly Cloudy	47F (8C)	35F (2C)
 Tokyo, Japan	Partly Cloudy	42F (6C)	36F (2C)
 Washington, DC	Cloudy	45F (7C)	34F (1C)



Military exercises scheduled at FDM

The Emergency Management Office, Office of the Governor, would like to inform the general public that the U.S. Military would be conducting Aerial Maneuvers and Live Fire Training Exercises on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla. The scheduled dates and time are as follows:

- Sept. 7 and 12 from 11am to 4pm for Aerial Maneuvers.
- Sept. 15 to Sept. 22 from 10am to 12am for Live Fire Training Exercises.

The general location of this activity will be on the island of Farallon de Mendenilla Training Area (R7201) from 15,000 feet mean sea level (MSL) on a 10 nautical miles radius on all quadrants.

The cooperation and understanding of the general public is greatly appreciated.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Emergency Management Office, Operation Section at telephone numbers 322-9529/9572/8001-3, ext. 23, 24, 31, VHF Marine Channel 16. Single Side Band radio on 5.205.0, or visit our website at www.cnmiemo.gov.mp

hardt eye

Gospel singer coming to Saipan

David MacDonald, a multi-talented performing artist from Ottawa, Canada, will hold a one-day concert this coming Sunday, Sept. 12.

Dubbed as *Love at the Center*, the concert will be held at AJ's restaurant in Susupe beginning at 11am.

The Diocese of Chalan Kanoa Commission on Family Life was the organization that invited MacDonald to fly to Saipan.

During the concert, MacDonald is expected to talk about his experience and share with the people his music that led him to become one of the most sought-after "pro-life, pro-family, pro-God evangelizer and Christian musician."

Father Mike Cristomo, from the parishes of Merizo/Umatat of Guam, will also be on hand to welcome MacDonald to Saipan.

According to Carmen Gaskin, MacDonald was the featured presenter on the topic of *There is only one Choice: Pro-Life* that was held at the Parish Liturgical Conference.

Gaskin also indicated that MacDonald would be hosting the afternoon of *Family Time Together for Christian music*.

For more information on MacDonald's upcoming concert and related events, please call Gaskin at 236-7891.

Seats are limited for the concert so interested individuals are urged to make reservations. For reservations, please call the AJ's Restaurant at 234-9022 or 234-9019.

Chamber meeting to discuss Chaba aftermath

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce meeting, postponed until Wednesday, Sept. 8, will feature a panel of speakers addressing typhoon issues.

Vicky Villagomez will speak as representative of the Emergency Management Office. Representatives from both the Federal Emergency Management Agency and Small Business Administration will also speak about recovery issues.

Steve Hiney will address issues from the perspective of the Department of Public Works and Chip Guard, from the National Weather Service, will cover typhoon forecasting and tracking.

The Chamber meeting will be held at Charley's at PIC. Cost for the luncheon is \$12; the buffet starts at 11:30am and the meeting runs from noon to 1:30pm. The meeting is open to all businesses in Saipan, as well as the general public. Visitors are also welcome.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce is the largest private business organization in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Through business leadership and membership involvement in community issues, the Chamber continues to develop its role as a beacon for good business in these islands, the Pacific region and in business communities abroad.

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VERIZON 611
CMYK

It's a go for proposed Plumeria Estates



The Tottotville subdivision in Koblerville.

AGNES E. DONATO

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

The road has been paved for the construction of a new housing project similar to Tottotville subdivision in Koblerville.

The Marianas Public Lands Authority on Friday designated 128 Koblerville lots to the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. The quitclaim deeds for the properties serve as proof of NMHC's legal ownership of the properties. NMHC will use them as collateral when negotiating with banks to finance the mortgages of the homes.

MPLA chair Ana Demapan-Castro, however, attached one condition to the approval: that NMHC will prioritize all prospective first-time homeowners who have existing loan applications to purchase homes at the new subdivision.

The housing project, called "Plumeria Estates," will be located near Tottotville Subdivision in Koblerville. NMHC said a total of 128 houses will be available for sale, consisting of two-, three-, and four-bedroom units.

NMHC is now accepting loan applications from eligible residents.

Earlier, Gov. Juan N. Babauta reported that the Housing Task Force is now reviewing bid proposals from prospective developers for the construction of houses for the Plumeria Estates.

The winning developer will finance the construction of the housing project. The mortgages of the completed homes, in turn, will be used to reimburse the developer for the costs of building.

Initially, the Housing Task Force made plans to build two homestead subdivisions similar to Tottotville. Based on the earlier plan, 78 houses would be built in Koblerville and 74 more on Capitol Hill.

The task force, however, decided to concentrate the housing development in Koblerville, following a site inspection of both areas. The group found that the rugged topography of the Capitol Hill homestead lots made the area too costly for the project.

Further, the task force decided to increase the number of homestead lots in Koblerville "to make the housing development project more attractive to prospective developers," Babauta said.

Out of the 228 lots in the proposed development area next to Tottotville, only 78 homestead lots have met the permit requirements. But the increase in number of lots available for the Plumeria Estates project was made possible after the Division of Fish and Wildlife agreed to waive their concern on the adjacent homestead lots.

As a result, there are now 128 homestead lots available for the housing project.

Port Moresby clinics close while officials cruise

PORT MORESBY, Papua New Guinea (The National/PIR)—The urban clinics service in the National Capital District faces total shutdown because City Hall says it does not have the money to pay outstanding water bills of about K30,000 (US\$9,330) for its 12 clinics.

However, City Hall has managed to scrap together money to buy a latest model executive vehicle available in PNG, which is worth K165,000 (US\$51,315).

City water managers, Eda

Ranu, turned off the taps at three of the busiest clinics—Gerehu, Lawes Road and Badili—last Tuesday, the same day that NCDC took delivery of the latest model Nissan Cefiro from a motor dealer.

And Eda Ranu warned it would turn off the taps at the other nine clinics if City Hall does not settle its bills which amount to between K2,000 (US\$622) and K3,000 (US\$933) per clinic.

The director of the National

Capital District Urban Clinics, Sam Kove confirmed yesterday that the three of 12 NCDC-funded clinics were closed.

Kove described Gerehu, Lawes Road and Badili as the three biggest in the city and the shutdowns mean that more than 30,000 people living near each of the clinic would be affected.

"Eda Ranu decided to disconnect the water supplies to the three biggest clinics even though they (12 clinics) were all billed together, so by closing a

few, we pay all our bills," Kove, who is in charge of all urban clinics, said.

He said they had made arrangements for paying Eda Ranu but "the Government does not have money."

"When there is no money, there is not much we can do," he said.

But a City Hall official confirmed yesterday that it had forked out K165,000 (US\$51,315) last Tuesday for the metallic blue executive sedan, registration BBP 457, last Tuesday.

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Tragedy in Russia

"I do not believe I am exaggerating in affirming that the empire of Russia is a country whose inhabitants are the most miserable on earth, because they suffer at one and the same time the evils of barbarism and of civilization."

—The Marquis de Custine,
"Letters From Russia," 1839

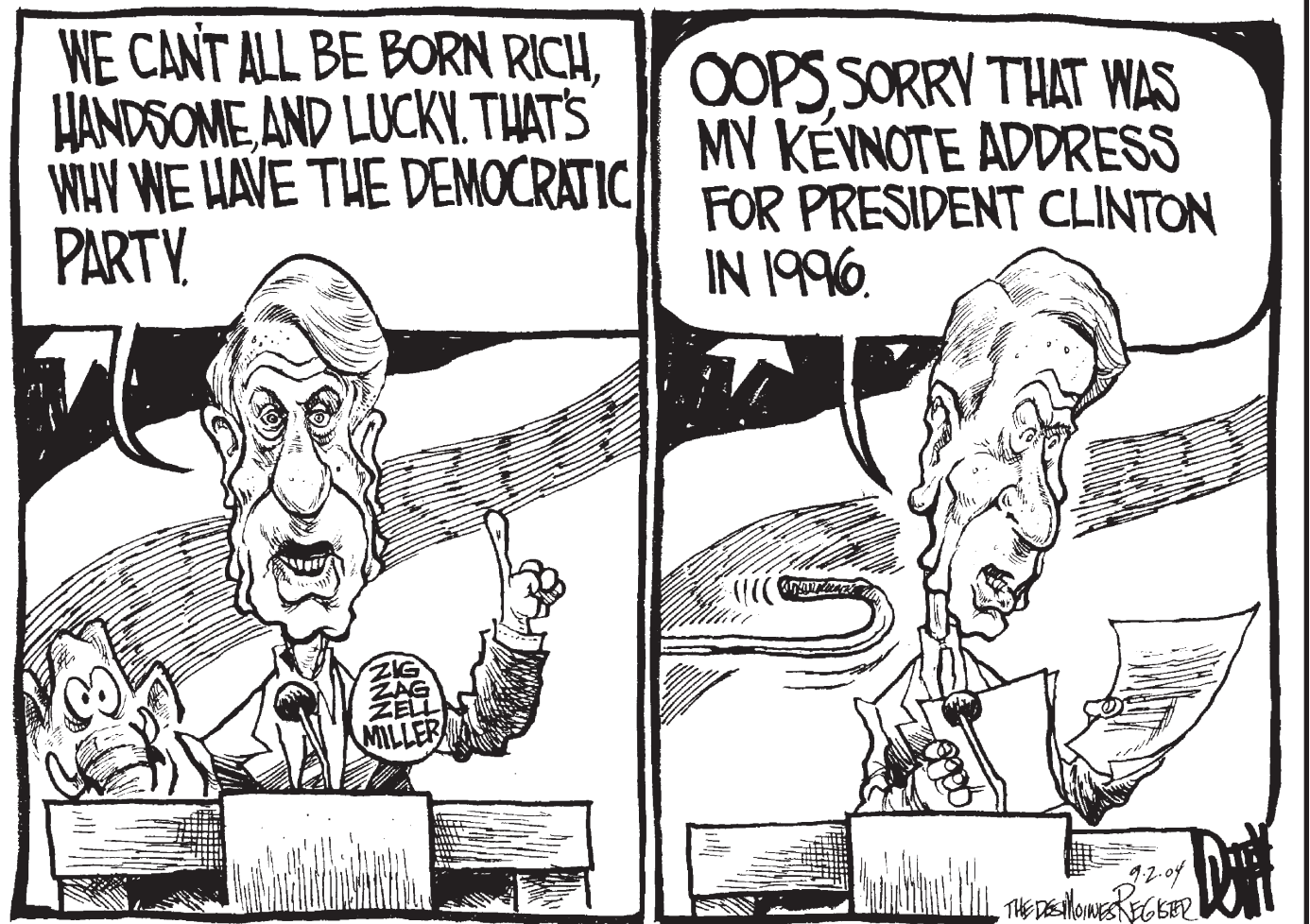
MORE THAN 160 years after the Marquis de Custine wrote those words, his infamous observations of Russian culture were as relevant as ever this week as the world became acquainted with the full horror of events in southern Russia. Since masked gunmen stormed into a school in the town of Beslan on Wednesday, the first day of the Russian school year, barbarism has been in evidence, along with the worst fruits of "civilization": automatic weapons, bombs, grenades, suicide belts and attack helicopters. The gunmen, described as "inhuman" by those who survived, held hundreds of children and their parents hostage for two days without allowing them food or water, and they shot at those who tried to escape. Russian authorities then stormed the school Friday without any plan. The result was chaos on an almost apocalyptic scale: Bloody children, piles of corpses, officials providing false or contradictory information, wild rumors, terror and panic.

It is important, in the wake of these events, that the U.S. government reiterate its sympathy for the Russians and offer to help track down and identify the terrorists who planned and carried out this attack. There can be no excuse, no justification, no rationalization for the barbarity of seizing a school and turning children into victims. Every parent feels the anguish of the parents of Beslan.

It remains true, as we have said before, that the Russian government should seek a political settlement in Chechnya, where civilians also have been the chief victims for much of the past decade. Russian President Vladimir Putin declared that the Chechen war was "over" long ago. But the underlying causes of that war have never been dealt with, and the war itself has had a devastating effect on Chechen society. Deeper, longer-lasting reconciliation between Russia and Chechnya requires not the Russian imposition of another puppet government on Chechnya but a more profound search for a way in which the two can live side by side in peace. This must involve negotiation with moderate Chechens—even moderate Chechen separatists—and the creation of a truly representative Chechen government. If, that is, it is not too late already.

Russia's abominable behavior has helped spark but does not excuse Chechen terrorists and their partners in crime. Chechen terrorism makes less likely but no less essential a solution to Chechnya's misery.

2004, The Washington Post



The ban on a Muslim scholar

By PAUL DONNELLY
THE WASHINGTON POST

Tariq Ramadan, a professor at the College of Geneva and the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, is the author of a book that is perhaps the most hopeful work of Muslim theology in the past thousand years. This month he was to come to America to take the position of Luce professor of religion, conflict and peace-building at Notre Dame's Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, when suddenly his visa was revoked. Apparently Notre Dame didn't realize what a dangerous man it was getting.

Ramadan's grandfather was Hasan Banna, who founded the Muslim Brotherhood. But Ramadan's own views on the role of his faith, published in his book, "To Be a European Muslim," directly confront the alienation of Islam from modernity. Ramadan argues that the "us vs. them" vision of Islam, exponentially exaggerated by Osama bin Laden's demented Wahhabism, derives not from the Koran but from a worldview that is 10 centuries out of date.

When I interviewed Ramadan not long after Sept. 11, 2001, I asked what alternative he could offer Muslims. The true vision of Islam, he said, is not a snapshot of the world three centuries after the death of the prophet, but rather the unchanging Koran itself "dar ash-Shahada," the "House of Witness," in which believers and unbelievers alike compete in doing good deeds to prove the truth.

Notre Dame officials insist that they have reviewed every charge against the Swiss scholar and agree with the likes of Scotland Yard and Swiss intelligence, which have found them to be groundless.

Ramadan has been attacked for "anti-Semitism." Why? Because of an article on French communalism that included this sentence: "French Jewish intellectuals whom we had thought of until then as universalist thinkers (have started) to develop anal-

yses increasingly oriented toward a communitarian concern."

Set this statement beside an essay on anti-Semitism by Ramadan, in which he writes the following: "Nothing in Islam can legitimize xenophobia or the rejection of a human being due to his/her religious creed or ethnicity. One must say unequivocally, with force, that anti-Semitism is unacceptable and indefensible."

The official reason for revoking Ramadan's visa is the USA Patriot Act's provisions for those who have prominently espoused or endorsed terrorist activity. Ramadan has been dogged by rumors for years—that he knew bin Laden as a boy ("no"), that terrorists attend his classes ("I don't know who is listening to me when I give a lecture in front of thousands of people"), that he arranged a meeting with al-Qaida deputy Ayman Zawahiri and convicted terrorist Omar Abdel Rahman in Geneva in 1991 (when, Ramadan notes, he was not even in Switzerland).

And this: that he denies al-Qaida was behind the Sept. 11 attacks. "Never, never, never," Ramadan says in a determined voice over the phone. "I said to the Muslims after it happened, don't try to say 'We don't know who did this.' I said this from the very beginning, from Sept. 13, just two days later, even though we didn't know then exactly who did it—but we know. They were some Muslims."

Tariq Ramadan is a Muslim Martin Luther. That's why Notre Dame, an old institution with a modern Catholic dedication to theological scholarship, hired him. Winning the war on terrorism requires theology the way defeating communism required ideology. The Bush administration (which wouldn't do the necessary visa checks to keep real terrorists out of fake flight schools) risks a kind of unilateral disarmament.

Does it really think that Notre Dame University would hire an anti-Semite and advocate of terrorism?

The author is former head of the Immigration Reform Coalition.

THE TRUTH

From Page 11

If Babauta’s office forwarded a total of \$3.5 million from the JGTRRA O3 appropriations and only \$1.75 million went to the purchase of the physical La Fiesta Mall structure, then the question that must be posed is: Who were the parties that received the \$1.75 million regarding the lease and who authorized the lease payment of \$1.75 million? If the funds went to the landowners who are Babauta’s family, then they would receive about \$2 million if the first annual payment \$200,000 with interest is made in October 2004.

Why did the BOR and the Governor’s Office not inform the media and island community the truth regarding the particulars of the La Fiesta Mall transaction? The cutting in half of the public funds that should have been expended for the physical mall but instead diverted to land owners from Babauta’s family should be looked into by the federal authorities and the grand jury to ascertain the extent of the misuse of public funds, as well as if there were improprieties.

Recently Babauta requested that a particular organization “come clean” about various issues. It might be appropriate to pose the same question to the governor in light of the fact that the circumstances

surrounding the La Fiesta Mall transaction are peculiar and it is nebulous and convoluted because of the number of parties involved.

Article XIX (Code of Ethics) of the Commonwealth Constitution states that “the legislature shall enact a comprehensive Code of Ethics which shall apply to appointed and elected officers and employees of the Commonwealth and its political subdivisions, including members of boards, commissions, and other instrumentalities.

If was determined that the BOR was in “gross neglect or dereliction of duty and/or was responsible for breach of fiduciary duty” (Article III Executive

Branch, Section 21), then the governor can remove any or all of the board members justifiably.

On the other hand, if the governor has been found to be involved with “corruption or neglect of duty” (Article III Executive Branch, Section 19), then the governor is subject to “impeachment” as provided in Article II, Section 8 of the Commonwealth Constitution.

The La Fiesta Mall transaction has raised important questions regarding the adherence of federal and CNMI statutes of public funds and the establishment of public debt. In light of the circumstances, a full scale investigation is warranted and in order to ascertain if any violation

of the law, e.g., fraud, embezzlement, etc., took place when the La Fiesta deal was made with NMC, NHS, CDLC, and the property owners who happen to be the governor’s family.

Because the figure of \$3.5 million appropriated to purchase the physical structure of La Fiesta was announced to the media and island community in August 2003 was not entirely expended for the facility, then the credibility of the governor and the people he appointed to the NMC BOR must be questioned and certainly not ignored.

Dr. Jesus D. Camacho
Delano, California

Nation

Sluggish Frances cuts power to 2M in Fla.

By ALLEN G. BREED
AP WRITER

FORT PIERCE, Fla. (AP)—Massive Hurricane Frances trudged toward land with 105 mph wind and pelting rain late Saturday, knocking out power to 2 million people and forcing Floridians to endure a frightening night amid roaring gales that shredded roofs and uprooted trees.

Transformers popped along streets, sending sparks into darkened skies, as families huddled in shelters, bathrooms and hotel lobbies. The wind-whipped coastal waters resembled a churning hot tub.

“I think I’m not going to sleep all night. I hate it at nighttime,” said 64-year-old Vonda Gould, a Melbourne evacuee who braved the storm at a Palm Bay hotel. “We don’t know when something’s going to come flying through the window. It’s very spooky.”

The storm’s slow-motion assault—Frances crawled toward Florida at just 5 mph before stalling over warm water—came more than a day later than predicted. The hurricane’s eye crept closer to the east-central Florida coast Saturday night, but its

strongest winds were expected to begin hitting early Sunday.

“Those folks are getting pounded, and they’ve got worse to come,” said Max Mayfield, director of the National Hurricane Center.

En route, Frances shattered windows, toppled power lines and flooded neighborhoods in the Bahamas, driving thousands from their homes. The Freeport airport was partially submerged in water.

For many Floridians, this would be a night to remember.

Mary Beth and Jack Stiglin, evacuees from nearby Hutchinson Island, sat in their hotel room in Fort Pierce, eating ham and cheese wraps by candlelight as the power lines outside their room sparked and died.

“It’s a little romantic. I brought the roses from our garden because they would have been blown away anyway,” Mrs. Stiglin said.

Frances’ arrival came three weeks after Hurricane Charley killed 27 people and caused billions of dollars in damage in southwestern Florida.

For some Floridians, the second storm couldn’t arrive soon enough.

“I just want it to be quick. Just get it over with,” said Woodeline Jadis, 20, tired of waiting at a shelter in Orlando.

The storm’s leading edge pounded the Florida coast early Saturday, and about 300 miles of coastline remained under a hurricane warning. Frances was so big that virtually the entire state feared damage from wind and water. Forecasters said the storm would dump 8 to 12 inches of rain, with up to 20 inches in some areas.

“This is the time to show some resolve and not be impatient,” Gov. Jeb Bush said. “This is a dangerous, dangerous storm.”

In Washington, President Bush declared a major disaster in the counties affected by Frances, meaning residents will be eligible for federal aid.

The largest evacuation in state history, with 2.8 million residents ordered inland, sent 70,000 residents and tourists into shelters. The storm shut down much of Florida, including airports and amusement parks, at the start of the usually busy Labor Day weekend.

Some evacuees, frustrated by Frances’ sluggish pace, decided to leave shelters Saturday and return later.



Scott Blair, a student at University of Louisiana Monroe, braces himself as he video tapes waves pounding a boat dock in Fort Pierce, Fla., as Hurricane Frances approaches the Florida coast Saturday Sept. 4, 2004. Blair is working on a research project on hurricanes.

Deborah Nicholas dashed home from a Fort Pierce shelter to take a shower, but stayed only a few minutes when the lights started flickering and trees began popping out of the ground. She has slept in a deck chair at a high school cafeteria since Wednesday.

“I’m going stir crazy,” Nicholas said. “I’m going to be in a straitjacket by Monday. I don’t know how much longer I can take it. Have mercy.”

Ron and Virginia Pastuch went home after spending two days at a Palm Bay shelter. Pastuch said he had never been in a shelter before.

“It’s the first time, and the last time, too,” he said.

Clinton in good spirits before surgery

By MICHAEL WEISSENSTEIN
AP WRITER

NEW YORK (AP)—Former President Bill Clinton was in good spirits Saturday, walking around his hospital room in street clothes and buoyed by thousands of get-well messages as he awaited heart bypass surgery early this coming week, people close to the family said.

Clinton was expected to undergo surgery as early as Monday but probably Tuesday, said Democratic Party Chairman Terry McAuliffe, who said the former president was “upbeat” when he spoke to him by phone Friday.

“I thanked him for getting the Democrats back on the front page, and he told me that’s about as far as he’s willing to go,” McAuliffe said Saturday. “I said

I needed him out on the campaign trail as soon as possible, and he said as he soon as he recuperates he’ll be ready to go.”

He was to undergo triple or quadruple bypass surgery, according to a person close to Clinton who requested anonymity.

Clinton’s wife and daughter visited him in the hospital Saturday, and he had received 15,000 get-well messages relayed from the Web site of his foundation, a spokeswoman said.

One message posted on the Web site Saturday read: “I’m having an awfully hard time imagining anything big enough to block a heart as large and generous as yours, but I hope you have the best surgeons in the country working on it.”

Another, from a self-described “Reagan Democrat” said: “While I did not vote for President Clinton, nor agreed with a lot of his points of view, I always liked him. ... In March of 2002, I underwent quad bypass surgery, so I know what he will going through in the coming hours, days, and months. My prayers are with him.”

Clinton was admitted to New York Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia on Friday after suffering chest pains and shortness of breath.

He had been scheduled to accompany his wife, Sen. Hillary Clinton, on a two-day tour of upstate New York. Instead, the senator and the couple’s daughter, Chelsea, joined Clinton in New York City. Chelsea Clinton was seen entering the hospital Saturday afternoon, followed by her mother.

LA Airport terminals open after scares

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Four terminals at Los Angeles International Airport were shut down for more than three hours Saturday after a passenger bypassed security at one terminal and two flashlight batteries exploded during screening at another, authorities said.

The incidents, about a half-hour apart, were apparently unrelated and there was no link to terrorism, according to the federal Transportation Security Administration. Thousands of Labor Day weekend travelers were evacuated from the terminals.

The airport’s main road, the Tom Bradley International Terminal and terminals 6, 7 and 8 were reopened around noon.

The scare at the international terminal came when batteries in a plastic flashlight inside checked luggage exploded as the bag was being hand-searched by a TSA worker, TSA spokeswoman Amy Von Walter said. She said the small but loud blast appeared to have been caused by old batteries.

The TSA worker suffered swollen hands and was taken to a hospital. Several other people complained of ringing in their ears.

The passenger whose bag was being screened at the time is a Japanese citizen who planned to take a flight to Tokyo, said Police Chief William Bratton. He was questioned by police and the FBI before being released. The FBI also interviewed other nearby travelers. The flashlight in his bag disintegrated when the two C batteries inside exploded, Bratton said.

Asia

US near seizing bin Laden, official says

By **MATTHEW PENNINGTON**
AP WRITER

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan (AP)—The United States and its allies have moved closer to capturing Osama bin Laden in the last two months, a top U.S. counterterrorism official said in a television interview broadcast Saturday.

“If he has a watch, he should be looking at it because the clock is ticking. He will be caught,” Joseph Cofer Black, the U.S. State Department coordinator for counterterrorism, told private Geo television network.

Asked if concrete progress had been made during the last

two months—when Pakistan has arrested dozens of terror suspects including some key al-Qaida operatives—Black said, “Yes, I would say this.”

Black, who briefed a group of Pakistani journalists after talks with officials here Friday, said he could not predict exactly when bin Laden and other top al-Qaida fugitives would be nabbed.

“What I tell people, I would be surprised but not necessarily shocked if we wake up tomorrow and he’s been caught along with all his lieutenants. That can happen because of the programs and infrastructure in place,” he told Geo.

Bin Laden and his top associate, Ayman al-Zawahri, are believed to be hiding some place along the rugged border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Officials have divulged no solid intelligence about bin Laden’s precise whereabouts, and it’s not clear if they have any.

Pakistan is a key ally of the United States in its war on terror, and Black’s visit comes weeks after Pakistani security forces captured Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani, a Tanzanian wanted for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in east Africa, and Mohammed Naeem Noor Khan, a Pakistani computer ex-

pert allegedly linked to al-Qaida operatives around the world.

The arrests led to a terror warning in the United States, and arrests in Britain and the United Arab Emirates.

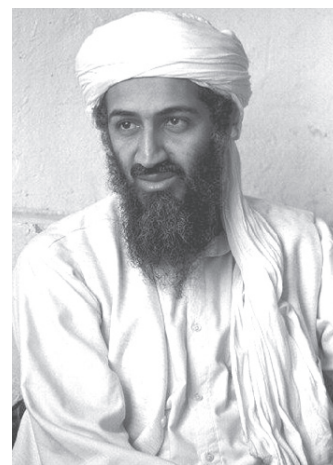
Black attended a meeting of the Pakistan-U.S. Joint Working Group on Counterterrorism and Law Enforcement in Islamabad on Thursday and Friday.

During the talks, Pakistan asked U.S. officials for more helicopters, surveillance and communications equipment to help Pakistani forces guard border areas near Afghanistan “more efficiently,” a Pakistani official at the talks said.

“We got a positive response from the American officials,” said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Pakistan has deployed about 70,000 troops along the Afghan border and conducted several military operations this year in its lawless and largely autonomous tribal regions against al-Qaida suspects and their local supporters.

Black hailed Pakistan’s efforts in counterterrorism—despite criticism from Western officials who say that elements of the former ruling Taliban regime in Afghanistan still operate inside Pakistan.



Exiled Saudi dissident Osama bin Laden is seen in this April 1998, file photo in Afghanistan.

Malaysia’s Anwar leaves for operation

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—Malaysia’s newly freed former deputy leader Anwar Ibrahim left for Germany on Saturday to undergo back surgery for an injury suffered partly during a police beating six years ago, cheered on by thousands of supporters who brought Kuala Lumpur’s international airport to a standstill.

It was the biggest demonstration of support for the charismatic politician since he was

freed from prison Thursday after Malaysia’s highest court overturned a sodomy conviction that he long contended was trumped up to destroy him politically. The crowds were evidence that Anwar remains a potent force in Malaysian politics despite his six-year imprisonment.

“I hope to come back stronger to continue my struggle,” Anwar told reporters before he left.

The cheering crowd chanted “Viva Anwar!” and “Arrest

Mahathir!” and sang Muslim religious verses as Anwar, from his wheelchair, flashed a thumbs-up sign.

The fervor of the crowd was reminiscent of the tens of thousands of people Anwar led in the streets in 1998 to demand the ouster of his one-time mentor and former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad, and call for democratic reforms. Mahathir subsequently fired him as heir-apparent.



A government official walks by a drum containing nuclear waste at the Ministry of Science and Technology in Kwacheon, south of Seoul, Friday Sept. 3, 2004.

S. Korean scientist admits uranium tests

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—A prominent South Korean scientist acknowledged Saturday that an unauthorized experiment to enrich uranium was conducted in three or four tests in early 2000, but said the amount in question was “so small it’s almost invisible.”

South Korea scrambled to deny it has ambitions for a nuclear program after the country admitted its scientists conducted an unauthorized experiment in 2000 to enrich a small amount of uranium. The revelation threatened to complicate an international standoff over communist North Korea’s nuclear

weapons development.

The experiments were conducted between January and February 2000 at the government-affiliated Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, its President Chang In-soon told The Associated Press Saturday.

“You often don’t get the desired result in the first test,” Chang said. “In the viewpoints of scientists, whether you had one test or 10 tests doesn’t make a big difference in this case.”

He said South Korean scientists enriched uranium to 10 percent during the tests—much lower than weapons grade, which requires enrichment of

more than 90 percent.

Chang said the amount enriched was “so small it’s almost invisible.”

“It’s absurd for some people to speculate about weapons grade over this,” he said. “I don’t think any of the uranium was enriched to weapons grade.”

He said only 0.01 ounce of uranium was produced during the tests.

Several pounds of highly enriched uranium are needed to build a bomb, experts say.

South Korea on Friday called the experiment a “one-time” episode, saying the enrichment tests were terminated and never revived.

Japan’s crown princess leaves residence

TOKYO (AP)—Japan’s Crown Princess Masako, who is recovering from a psychological disorder brought on by the pressures of royal life, left her residence for the first time in four months on Saturday to visit Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, an official said.

Crown Prince Naruhito accompanied his wife on the visit to the Imperial Palace,

which last about an hour, the Imperial Household Agency said. Dressed in a beige suit, Masako smiled and waved to reporters as a silver sedan carried her and Naruhito through the palace gate.

Masako, 40, has a stress-induced adjustment disorder and has experienced bouts of depression and anxiety, the agency said in July. She was un-

dergoing counseling and taking prescription drugs, it said.

A Harvard-educated former diplomat, Masako has not conducted official palace duties since December.

She last left Togu Palace, the residence she shares with Naruhito and their 2-year-old daughter Aiko, in the spring when she went to a mountain resort town to recuperate from her illness.

century labor

India, Pakistan agree to widen peace talks



NEW DELHI (AP)—Nuclear rivals India and Pakistan agreed Saturday to widen their peace dialogue in talks that focused on eight festering issues, including the decades-old dispute over the Himalayan region of Kashmir.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reiterated India's commitment to peace with Pakistan. At his first news conference since his Congress party unexpectedly swept to power in May, he said the people of South Asia were "bound together by a shared destiny."

Pakistan's Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri said settling the five-decade-long conflict over Kashmir is the key to peace.

The talks on Saturday between India's Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and his Pakistani

counterpart Riaz Khokhar talks were "productive," the rival South Asian nations said in a joint statement afterward.

The two foreign secretaries will recommend "further deepening and broadening the engagement between the two sides," the statement said.

The talks cleared the way for a fresh dialogue between the neighboring countries' foreign ministers. India's External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh and Pakistani Foreign Minister Kasuri are to meet Sunday and Monday in New Delhi.

The Indian prime minister said he was committed to "the peace process and to carrying forward the dialogue process."

"Our approach to talks will be based on realism and the belief that the people of South Asia are

bound together by a shared destiny," said Manmohan Singh, dressed in a traditional white tunic and blue Sikh turban.

He promised to visit Kashmir soon, saying his government was "alive to the sentiments and concerns of the people of Jammu and Kashmir."

India and Pakistan have gone to war twice over Kashmir, which is divided between the two countries and which both claim in its entirety.

"A resolution of the Kashmir issue alone will guarantee peace and security in South Asia," Pakistan's Kasuri said in a statement before heading to New Delhi. This is "not the time for tall promises, but for investment of time and energy in solving problems which I do not find intractable," he said.



Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, left, shakes hand with his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Khokhar in New Delhi, India, Saturday, Sept. 4, 2004.

Arroyo aides defend state visit to China

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's aides brushed aside criticism that her state visit to China has turned into a family vacation amid the country's financial troubles, and urged Filipinos to consider benefits of improved trade ties with Beijing.

Arroyo came under fire in the local media after reporters spotted an extended first family board the president's chartered plane to China on Wednesday. Among them were her husband, two

sons and their wives, as well as granddaughters, their nannies and Arroyo's brother-in-law.

Just before the visit, Arroyo, in a bid to keep a lid on government spending, signed an order banning all foreign travel except for ministerial meetings and trips funded by grants. Unnecessary domestic trips, gifts and donations, and most celebrations and sports activities in government offices were also forbidden.

The Philippines is struggling

with a \$60 billion foreign debt and a deficit target this year of \$35 billion.

Presidential spokesman Ignacio Bunye said in radio interviews Friday that Arroyo's relatives paid their own way, and the government only paid for fares of the official delegation - the president, her husband, legislators and Cabinet and local officials. Beijing paid the delegates' expenses in China, he said.

Bunye said earlier that

Arroyo's eldest son and her brother-in-law were part of the official delegation as members of the House of Representatives.

"Our appeal is for people not to make a big thing out of this and to look at the positive results of the trip of the president," he said. "We can see that if we talk about the economic and trade benefits and about improving relations between the Philippines and China, on the whole the state visit of our president has been very beneficial."

North Korea says 'defectors' were kidnapped

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea has filed a protest with the United Nations and the Red Cross, accusing South Korea and the United States of "kidnapping" its citizens, a North Korean weekly said.

South Korea airlifted 468 North Koreans from an unidentified Southeast Asian country in July, saying they fled their communist homeland via its border with China and then traveled to the unidentified country hoping to defect to the capitalist South.

In a letter to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, North Korea called the airlift a "terrorist act perpetrated in broad daylight."

"We urge your organization to take all possible steps to stop the United States and South Korean authorities from kidnapping our people disguising them as defectors," North Korea said in a letter to the Red Cross.

The North Korean letters, carried by the North Korean weekly Tongil Sinbo, were posted on Saturday on the North Korean Web site www.uriminzokkiri.com and dated Aug. 27 and Aug. 28.

North Korea said South Korea, under a U.S. policy hostile toward the North, runs a widespread network of agents in China and other Southeast Asian countries dedicated to "luring and kidnapping" North Koreans.

More than 5,000 North Koreans have defected to South Korea since the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty. Last year, the number of defectors arriving in the South reached 1,285, up from 1,140 in 2002 and 583 in 2001.

The Koreans were divided in 1945. Their border remains sealed and guarded by nearly 2 million troops on both sides.

Employees sentenced over gas leak in China

BEIJING (AP)—Six gas company employees were sentenced to prison from three to six years Saturday over a gas well leak that killed 243 people in southwestern China, one of the country's worst-ever industrial accidents.

The No. 2 Intermediate Court of Chongqing said the employees had the "biggest responsibility" in the Dec. 23 incident, according to Sina.com, a major news Web site.

Court spokesman Ran Yuning confirmed the verdict had been handed down, but refused to give details.

State television showed the employees—five men and one woman—standing in a row before a three-judge panel. All were expressionless. They were dressed in regular clothes and flanked by police.

It wasn't immediately clear if they would appeal.

The leak spewed a deadly cloud of natural gas and hydrogen sulfide, and left destitute mountain villages over a 10-square-mile area strewn with bodies. Many residents died in their sleep or collapsed while trying to flee.

About 9,000 people were hurt and more than 41,000 villagers were forced from their homes in the rugged valleys around the Chuandongbei Gas Field northeast of Chongqing. Many survivors suffered lung damage and burns on their eyes and skin.

Investigators blamed the disaster on negligence by a drilling crew who they said dismantled equipment that would have contained the gas.

Car bomb kills 1, injures 2 in Kandahar

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—A jeep packed with explosives detonated at a roadside in the southern city of Kandahar on Friday, killing one person and seriously injuring two others in a passing taxi, police said. Gen. Salim Khan, the deputy police chief, said it was a terrorist attack and blamed the Taliban or al-Qaida.

Taliban-led rebels wage frequent attacks in southern and eastern Afghanistan, amid fears that the violence could rise as the country gears up for its first free elections since the hardline militia was ousted from power in late 2001.

Afghans will elect a president in the Oct. 9 poll.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military reported Friday that Afghan government forces backed by U.S. aircraft and artillery killed several insurgents in eastern Khost province.

A military statement gave few details, other than that one insurgent was also captured and two Afghan provincial militia fighters were injured in the clash late Thursday and sent for treatment at a U.S. base, Camp Salerno.

Khost, a former al-Qaida stronghold, lies about 120 miles south of Kabul.

TRIBUNE LABOR

World

Rainstorms in southwest China kill 19

BEIJING (AP)—Days of torrential rains in southwest China unleashed floods and landslides that killed at least 19 people, the government said Sunday.

The downpours in Sichuan, a province prone to seasonal flooding, fell nonstop from Thursday through Saturday with more rain forecast, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

In addition to the 19 confirmed dead, 21 others were missing, the report said. Rescue work was under way.

The rains also damaged farmland and reservoirs and caused severe traffic jams, it said.

In the hard-hit county of Quxian, rainfall reached 10 inches by Saturday and caused \$19 million in damage, the agency said.

The area is about 700 miles southwest of Beijing.



Health & Fitness

Study: Parents overlook obvious when trying to eliminate asthma-triggering allergy

By JANUARY W. PAYNE
THE WASHINGTON POST

When Alexandria, Va., resident Trish Thackston learned that her 1 1/2 -year-old son Connor had asthma, she and her husband, Chris, did everything they could to reduce the boy's exposure to triggers that set off his asthma attacks, which at times sent him to the emergency room.

A skin allergy test had shown that Connor was severely allergic to dust mites, tiny insects that feed on human and animal skin flakes and commonly infest mattresses, bedding, stuffed animals, upholstered furniture, carpets and curtains. He also had mild sensitivity to other environmental allergens.

An allergist gave the Thackstons a stack of brochures and booklets about steps to take and products to buy. He also reviewed protocols for controlling dust mites in the home. Afterward, the couple realized that their apartment's old carpeting and poor ventilation may have been aggravating Connor's asthma. "So we ended up actually moving," Trish Thackston said. "We ended up buying a house with hardwood floors."

The efforts didn't end there. The couple had their new home's ventilation system thoroughly cleaned before moving in, and they ditched their upholstered furniture in favor of leather. They covered Connor's mattress, box spring and pillows in mite-proof encasings. They also dusted and mopped every two or three days, Trish Thackston said, and washed Connor's sheets weekly in hot water. The Thackstons' commitment to allergy-proofing their home seems to have worked: Connor, now 6, has been off asthma and allergy medication since age 4.

But a new study, published in August's Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, suggests that many parents of children with asthma don't do as well. The study shows that parents implement some widely recommended measures to rid their homes of things likely to trigger an asthma attack. But they also take other, sometimes more expensive actions that were not likely to be useful. And they often fail to take other measures that could be more beneficial.

In 2002, 20 million people in the United States were reported to have asthma—a chronic inflammatory lung disease characterized by wheezing, difficulty breathing, chest tightness and coughing—according to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). About 6.1 million were children under age 18. Asthma attacks occur after exposure to environmental allergens (such as animal dander, mold and pollen), irritants (such as cigarette smoke, strong odors or air pollution), viral infections and some medications.

The new study found that parents often invest in expensive HEPA filters for vacuum cleaners and ventilation systems—both steps recommended by NHLBI. But some still allow cigarette smokers to light up around the child (or continue to smoke themselves), or keep windows open, allowing pollen into the home.

Four out of five parents surveyed reported knowing of "at least one environmental trigger of their child's asthma," according to the study. Of those families, about 81 percent attempted "some action to remediate or remove it. However, most of these actions were not specifically endorsed by current NHLBI asthma guidelines."

Of 1,788 actions parents described taking, more than "half were not included in NHLBI recommendations and were not likely to be useful in controlling the trigger that the parent reported," the authors wrote.

Nineteen percent of respondents made no attempt to address environmental triggers of their child's asthma.

The most common actions parents reported taking were purchasing special air filters (25 percent of all survey respondents); reducing their child's exposure to dust (22 percent); using a special vacuum cleaner (17 percent); purchasing mattress, comforter and/or pillow covers (16 percent); cleaning the home more often (13 percent); and reducing the child's exposure to animals (11 percent).

Despite NHLBI's caution that tobacco smoke is "the most important environmental indoor irritant," just 7 percent of study participants in smoking households reported "any attempts to reduce or eliminate smoke exposure," according to the study. Smokers were present in 24 percent of the households surveyed.

"Parents (will) ... pursue a lot of elaborate actions as opposed to the most straightforward one," study co-author Michael D. Cabana, a professor of pediatrics at the University of Michigan, said in an interview. That "tells me that sometimes the most straightforward action—quitting smoking—might not be the simplest and easiest for parents."

Martha White, a physician at the Institute for Asthma and

Allergy, a private practice in Wheaton, Md., and Chevy Chase, Md., said parents of children with asthma should make that sacrifice. "Parents should stop smoking, and if they can't, they should limit their smoking to outdoors," she said.

The survey is part of a larger University of Michigan project called the Physician Asthma Care Education program (PACE), an effort sponsored by the New Jersey-based Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. PACE aims to improve the way doctors counsel and educate parents and kids with asthma. In this portion of the five-year project, researchers conducted telephone interviews with 896 parents of children with asthma ages 2 to 12. Survey respondents were randomly selected from the clientele of 106 primary-care physicians participating in a trial for PACE, according to Cabana.

White said the most common allergens in children under 4 are animal dander, mold and dust mites.

"I have them (parents) do the allergy encasings (and) try to keep the stuffed animals out of the bed," White said. She also advises parents to check for mold in their homes—particularly in basements—and keep kids out of the bottom of bunk beds because the mattresses above and below can be ripe with dust mites.

For kids who are allergic to pets, White said, "at a minimum, we want the animal out of the house." She recommends keeping the animal outdoors or getting rid of it altogether. Starting the child on allergy shots, or immunotherapy, to desensitize them to the animal is another option.

The NHLBI guidelines indicate that doctors play an important role, too.

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+red/blue

Life & Style

Students wear rebellion on their sleeves, or chests, or backs

By LESLIE EARNEST
LOS ANGELES TIMES

It's hard to say who's more likely to mouth off when school convenes this fall: students or their T-shirts.

Statement T-shirts— also known as attitude tees — have caught on with teens outfitting themselves for the classroom: "Too cool for school," boasts a guys' shirt from Urban Outfitters. "I'm not doing homework tonight," warns an Old Navy girls' top.

Plain T-shirts are dull, explained 13-year-old Kassie Quackenbush, in a "surf 85" top as she shopped recently at Gap Inc.'s Old Navy store at Metro Pointe in Costa Mesa, Calif. "When you're walking through the halls, you can read someone's shirt if you're bored," she said, fingering a \$9 turquoise top that cajoled, "Oh bee-have."

Message laden T-shirts aren't new, but they've caught fire this summer, a bright spot in a lackluster retail season.

While overall apparel sales rose 0.2 percent year-over-year through June, the most recent figures available, T-shirts sales jumped 16 percent, said Marshal Cohen, chief industry analyst for NPD Group, a market research firm in Port Washington, N.Y. He predicted their sales would grow 20 percent in the back-to-school months of July and August.

"The T-shirt's really the statement piece for the season," he said.

One reason is that as clothing styles have become tamer, with khaki pants and button-down shirts almost as cool for school as they were in the 1980s, the shirts give teens a way to be a little edgy.

If your closet is full of the plaid skirts and crocheted ponchos every other freshman is wearing, you need a few proclamation tees to catch the eye.

"What can you get away with?"

That's the point," said Christy Glass Lowe, a managing director at USBX Advisory Services, a Los Angeles-based investment bank. Some get away with a lot, or think they can. Junior high and high school students are snapping up double-entendre tees. "The parents think it's innocent but the kids at school think it's talking about something completely different," said a clerk at Old Navy who declined to give her name.

One Abercrombie & Fitch Co. offering, for example, says, "North Carolina, it's great to be on top." Jay Smith, a 21-year-old clerk at Streetz, a clothing store in Glendale Galleria, in Glendale, Calif., wore one that said, "Big Boys Handyman Service. You'll love what we do with our tools." Meaning? "It's all interpretation," he said.

Most inscriptions are tame. Tilly's sells one for girls that says, "Take a picture! (...It'll last you longer)," and another that displays the long-winded, "I am never wrong, I'm always right. I thought I was wrong once, but I was wrong."

As for boys, they for the most part continue to align themselves with sports such as surfing, skateboarding and BMX riding by collecting T-shirts bearing Southern California brands such as Volcom and Element.

"It's a message of, 'I belong and this is the kind of stuff I wear,'" said Tom Kennedy of Anaheim, Calif.-based Pacific Sunwear of California Inc.'s Pac-Sun division.

Retailers are happy to wield any magnet to pull customers into their stores during the \$40 billion back-to-



LOS ANGELES TIMES

Mark Beckmann, 13, browses through T-shirts with his mother, Ulrike Beckmann, at Old Navy in Santa Monica, Calif.



LOS ANGELES TIMES

Graphic T-shirts give teens a way to be a little daring in a relatively tame style season.

The season, which begins in mid-July and stretches into September, gives retailers a chance to develop momentum for the crucial holiday shopping season, which accounts for an average of 22 percent of the year's sales.

In a survey last month by the National Retail Federation, retailers said they expected back-to-school sales to rise 7 percent over last year. But there wasn't a stampede as the season began. Sales at stores open at least a year rose a ho-hum 2.6 percent in July.

"This time around a lot of parents will be cutting back a little bit to try to save money," said Kurt Barnard president of Barnard's Retail Consulting Group, which studies consumer spending patterns. "The tax refunds have played out, mortgage refinanc-

BEST-SELLING BOOKS

WALL STREET JOURNAL BESTSELLERS
Fiction

- 1. "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown (Doubleday)
- 2. "Five People You Meet in Heaven" by Mitch Albom (Hyperion)
- 3. "The Rule of Four" by Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason (Dial Books)
- 4. "Skinny Dip" by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf)
- 5. "Angels & Demons" by Dan Brown (Atria)
- 6. "Dune: The Battle of Corrin" by Herbert, K. Anderson (Tor Books)
- 7. "White Hot" by Sandra Brown (Simon & Schuster)
- 8. "Winds of Change" by Martha Grimes (Viking)
- 9. "Dark Justice" by Jack Higgins (Putnam)
- 10. "Sam's Letters to Jennifer" by James Patterson (Little, Brown)

Nonfiction

- 1. "Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry" by John E. O'Neill, Jerome R. Corsi (Regnery)
- 2. "American Soldier" by Tommy Franks, M. McConnell (Regan-Books)
- 3. "The South Beach Diet" by Arthur Agatston (Rodale Press)
- 4. "The Purpose-Driven Life" by Rick Warren (Zondervan)
- 5. "Bushworld" by Maureen Dowd (Putnam)
- 6. "My Life" by Bill Clinton (Knopf)
- 7. "Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation" by Lynne Truss (Gotham)
- 8. "Good to Great" by Jim Collins (HarperBusiness)
- 9. "Skywriting: A Life out of the Blue" by Jane Pauley (Random House)
- 10. "The Abs Diet" by D.Zinczenko, T. Spiker (Rodale Press)

USA TODAY BESTSELLERS

(Key: F-Fiction; NF-Nonfiction; H-Hardcover; P-Paperback)

- 1. "Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry" by John E. O'Neill, Jerome R. Corsi (Regnery) (NF-H)

- 2. "The 9/11 Commission Report" (Norton) (NF-P)
- 3. "Angels & Demons" by Dan Brown (Pocket Star) (F-P)
- 4. "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix" by J.K.Rowling (Scholastic) (F-P)
- 5. "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown (Doubleday) (F-H)
- 6. "The Notebook" by Nicholas Sparks (Warner) (F-P)
- 7. "The South Beach Diet" by Tommy R. Franks (ReganBooks) (NF-H)
- 8. "Webster's New World Dictionary" (Pocket Books) (NF-P)
- 9. "The Purpose Driven Life" by Rick Warren (Zondervan) (NF-H)
- 10. "American Soldier" by Tommy R. Franks (ReganBooks) (NF-H)

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY BESTSELLERS

Hardcover Fiction

- 1. "The Da Vinci Code" by Dan Brown (Doubleday)
- 2. "The Five People You Meet in Heaven" by Mitch Albom (Hyperion)
- 3. "The Rule of Four" by Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason (Dial)
- 4. "Skinny Dip" by Carl Hiaasen (Knopf)
- 5. "Angels & Demons" by Dan Brown (Atria)
- 6. "White Hot" by Sandra Brown (Simon & Schuster)
- 7. "The Winds of Change" by Martha Grimes (Viking)
- 8. "Dune: The Battle of Corrin" by Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson (Tor)
- 9. "Dark Justice" by Jack Higgins (Putnam)
- 10. "Lost City" by Clive Cussler with Paul Kemprecos (Putnam)

Nonfiction/General

- 1. "Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry" by John E. O'Neill, Jerome R. Corsi (Regnery)
- 2. "American Soldier" by Gen. Tommy Franks with Malcolm McConnell (ReganBooks)
- 3. "The South Beach Diet" by Arthur Agatston (Rodale Press)
- 4. "Bushworld: Enter at Your Own Risk" by Maureen Dowd (Putnam)

- 5. "My Life" by Bill Clinton (Knopf)
- 6. "The Purpose-Driven Life" by Rick Warren (Zondervan)
- 7. "Eats, Shoots & Leaves" by Lynne Truss (Gotham)
- 8. "Skywriting: A Life Out of the Blue" by Jane Pauley (Random House)
- 9. "How to Make Love Like a Porn Star" by Jenna Jameson with Neil Strauss (ReganBooks)
- 10. "The Abs Diet" by David Zinczenko with Ted Spiker (Rodale)

Mass Market Paperbacks

- 1. "Angels & Demons" by Dan Brown (Pocket)
- 2. "The Notebook" by Nicholas Sparks (Warner)
- 3. "Deception Point" by Dan Brown (Pocket)
- 4. "The Teeth of the Tiger" by Tom Clancy (Putnam)
- 5. "Digital Fortress" by Dan Brown (St. Martin's Press)
- 6. "The 9/11 Report" by Thomas H. Kean, Chair and Lee H. Hamilton, Vice Chair (St. Martin's)
- 7. "Hello, Darkness" by Sandra Brown (Pocket Star)
- 8. "Bleachers" by John Grisham (Dell)
- 9. "The Bourne Ultimatum" by Robert Ludlum (Bantam)
- 10. "A Place of Hiding" by Elizabeth George (Bantam)

Trade Paperbacks

- 1. "The 9/11 Commission Report" (Norton)
- 2. "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time" by Mark Haddon (Vintage)
- 3. "The Wedding" by Nicholas Sparks (Warner)
- 4. "The Secret Life of Bees" by Sue Monk Kidd (Penguin)
- 5. "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri (Houghton/Mariner)
- 6. "The South Beach Diet Good Fats/Good Carbs Guide" by Arthur Agatston, M.D. (Rodale)
- 7. "Reading Lolita in Tehran" by Azar Nafisi (Random House)
- 8. "The Time Traveler's Wife" by Audrey Niffenegger (Harcourt/Harvest)
- 9. "The Lovely Bones" by Alice Sebold, (Back Bay Books)
- 10. "The Notebook" by Nicholas Sparks (Warner)

Pacino’s ‘Merchant’ screens in Venice

By TOM RACHMAN
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

VENICE, Italy (AP)—Al Pacino growls, grimaces and demands a “pound of flesh” as Jewish moneylender Shylock in a new version of Shakespeare’s “The Merchant of Venice.” But the actor argued Saturday that the film successfully addresses long-standing controversy over the work’s anti-Semitism.

Director Michael Radford—speaking to reporters after the film’s screening at the Venice Film Festival—added that his picture shouldn’t be seen as a tale just about tensions between Christians and Jews, but as a comment on the very modern problem of two cultures at odds.

Radford’s production begins with written titles that give context on persecution of the Jews in 16th-century Venice. It closes with a shot of the broken, tormented Shylock being locked in the ghetto that restricted Jews to a tiny quarter of the city.

Pacino had never thought he would play Shylock. But “I accepted it because I thought that Michael Radford had put together a script that addressed certain issues that were important to deal with,” he said.

“I thought it was a character to play that could reflect a human experience. And that to me was more important. Because there’s controversy over this type of material throughout the years,

and I thought that Michael Radford’s script addressed that,” Pacino said. “As soon as I read it, I thought, now I can do ‘The Merchant of Venice.’”

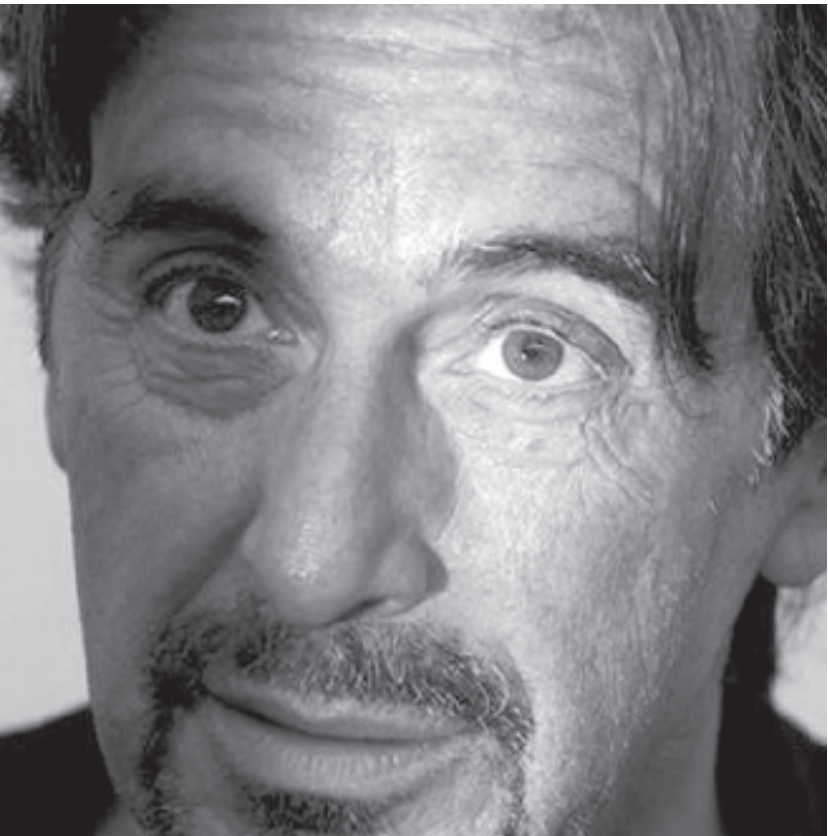
Shakespeare’s play tells of an anti-Semitic merchant (Jeremy Irons) who is bound by contract to give a pound of his flesh to Shylock for failing to repay a loan. However, it is Shylock who ultimately faces ruin when a court rules against him, humiliating and ruining the man.

The play has long sparked debate. It contains Shylock’s eloquent expression of the pain of anti-Jewish prejudice—“If you prick us, do we not bleed?” he asks in a famous soliloquy. It also casts him in the ugly anti-Semitic stereotype of a greedy, bloodthirsty Jew.

Radford argued that his work, which was filmed in period costume in Venice, should not be interpreted at face value.

“‘The Merchant of Venice,’ I saw as a piece that basically spoke not just of Jews and Venetians. But, using the epoch of the 1500s, it spoke of a very modern situation - that is, two cultures that don’t understand each other in terms of customs and beliefs,” he argued.

“I think that people watching the film will realize that it’s a film that’s talking about other things—that it’s not a film that speaks of the controversy between the Jews and Christians,” he said. “It does speak of that. But it’s a text set back then. We all hope that people un-



Pacino

derstand what we are saying.”

Another big film screening Saturday was “Finding Neverland” by director Marc Forster (“Monster’s Ball”). The picture—starring Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet, Julie Christie and Dustin Hoffman—is an account of how author J.M.

Barrie was inspired to write “Peter Pan.”

Depp manages a soft-spoken, understated performance as the dreamy Scottish writer who neglects his wife to care for a young widow (Winslet) and her boys. Depp’s character tries to draw them away from their grieving through fantasy, which leads to his famous children’s tale.

Depp saw a lesson for our own troubled times.

“If any one of us turned on the television to see the horrors that are happening to people in the world now, there’s no better time to strive to have some kind of hope through whatever, through imagination, through the ability to close your eyes,” he said.

Forster’s film is a big tear-jerker. But Depp, Winslet and Forster all said the film tried hard to avoid sentimentality. “It’s a pretty thin line,” Forster acknowledged. But “I tried to pull back.”

Other big screenings Saturday included some of the 21 films in competition for the Golden Lion awards, including “Tout un Hiver Sans Feu” by Greg Zglinski and “Mar Adentro” by Alejandro Amenabar.

Amenabar, who had huge success with “The Others” in 2001, takes a sharp turn in this latest picture. The film addresses the issue of euthanasia, and is based on the true story of a Spanish quadriplegic who seeks to end his life.

The nine-person jury that gives out the Golden Lions is headed by British director John Boorman and includes filmmaker Spike Lee, actresses Scarlett Johansson and Helen Mirren and others. Awards are handed out Sept. 11 at a ceremony hosted by Sophia Loren.

‘Next Top Model’ heads back to runway

NEW YORK (AP)—“America’s Next Top Model” is heading back to the runway. The UPN reality show has announced the cast for its third season of supermodel boot camp. The new season debuts Sept. 22.

Under the mentoring of Tyra Banks, 14 aspiring models will compete in tests of catwalks, fitness and publicity skills. The contests, according to the show’s Web site, will be judged for “both inner and outer beauty.”

The models’ poise will likely be tested while they live together in a New

York City loft under constant surveillance from the show’s cameras.

One contestant, Magdalena, 24, says, “I think it’s quite possible for me to lose my temper while living with 13 other girls.”

Kristi, who is 20 and from St. Louis, says, “I was raised really Christian. I have a lot of family that might be pretty disappointed if I end up naked on TV.”

Toccara, a 22 year-old from Dayton, Ohio, is the only plus-size model. She proclaims: “Girls, watch out, ‘cause big is in!”

Lelouch film opens festival in Deauville

PARIS (AP)—French director Claude Lelouch’s “Les Parisiens” opened the annual film festival in Deauville, a beach town in Normandy where he shot his 1966 love story, “A Man and a Woman.”

“Les Parisiens” tells of love and betrayal in the City of Light.

The festival, which opened Friday, runs through Sept. 12.

Lelouch also heads the jury judging the 10 films in the main com-

petition at the 30-year-old festival, a European showcase for mainly American movies.

Among them are Jim Carrey’s “Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind,” the domestic drama “We Don’t Live Here Anymore” and “Mean Creek,” a tale of youths who turn against one another during a river trip.

Lelouch says his love affair with Deauville started even before shooting “A Man and a Woman,” the tale of

star-crossed lovers that won the Oscar for best foreign film and the Cannes Film Festival’s top prize.

“When I was 13, I fell in love with a 12-year-old girl who went on vacations in Deauville,” he told Le Figaro newspaper. “Every day I walked 8 kilometers (5 miles) on the beach to see her.”

Lelouch’s jury—made up entirely of women—includes Anouk Aimee, the leading lady in his 1966 hit.

Godmother fears abusive mom is turning son into a monster

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: I am a 60-year-old woman. My children are grown and I have four grandchildren. I also have a godchild named "Noah," whom I adore.

Noah's mother, "Fay," didn't want him when he was born, but was talked out of giving him up by her mother and me. Her mother has since passed away.

Abby, I thought Fay would get over it, but she still doesn't want Noah. She blames him for taking her freedom away. The child is only 5 and adores his mother. No matter what she does, Noah loves her.

Fay is abusive. She yells and screams at Noah, calls him stupid and other names, keeps him in his room most of the time, and palms him off on anyone who will take him for a weekend.

This is not a happy little boy. He has so much anger in him at such an early age. Fay was abused by her mother like she's doing to her son. I have tried to get her help, but she says there's nothing wrong with her. How can I make Fay see that she's turning Noah into a monster? The father took off as soon as he found out Fay was pregnant. He has never seen his son. Please advise me.

OUT OF MY MIND IN TEXAS

DEAR OUT OF MY MIND: Since you are Noah's godmother and there is nobody else, it is now your turn to step up to the plate. You are responsible for the fact that this unfit mother didn't place her unwanted child for adoption at birth. You are only 60—you're not over the hill. Why don't YOU take Noah in and give him the love and support he needs—and possibly psychological counseling to undo the damage that has been done?

I think you already know what needs to be done. If you are unwilling or unable to do it, then pick up the phone and report Noah's mother to child protective services.

□ □ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: I recently learned that my twin sister, "Leslie," is pregnant. When I heard the news, I told her I wanted to throw her a baby shower. I have two little ones of my own, and my twin hosted my baby shower when I was pregnant with my first. Leslie was excited and gave me a thumbs up.

Today I was told that an aunt on her husband's side wants to give her a shower, and it sounds as if that's the way it's going to be. This aunt has always been bossy and pushy, and Leslie and her husband are afraid to refuse. I don't expect my twin to offend the other side of the family, but what about me? Am I being petty? My feelings are hurt.

REJECTED TWIN

DEAR TWIN: Please stop feeling hurt. Rather than being bossy or pushy, the aunt may instead be a stickler for proper etiquette. According to "Emily Post's Etiquette" (16th Edition): "Mothers and sisters of the mother-to-be should not give a shower, although sisters-in-law, close friends, aunts or cousins may. Naturally, mothers and sisters should be invited, but, as with any other gift-giving event, they should not initiate an invitation that bears an obligation on the part of the recipient to provide a present to a direct relative."

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)



Dear Abby

Jackson acknowledges settling past claims

By LINDA DEUTSCH
AP SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Michael Jackson, facing child-molestation allegations, acknowledged he has reached financial settlements with people in the past to avoid the embarrassment of going to court, but added he would never harm a child.

The six-paragraph statement was released hours before "Dateline NBC" broadcast a lengthy report alleging that the entertainer paid \$2 million to the son of an employee at his Neverland Ranch in 1990 to avoid a child-molestation accusation.

"I have spent my entire life helping millions of children across the world. I would never harm a child. It is unfortunate that some individuals have seen fit to come forward and make a complaint that is completely false," Jackson said Friday.

Although he made no direct reference to the broadcast, Jackson said he felt the need to "respond to untruths and sensationalism" and questioned "the timing and motive of this report."

The 46-year-old entertainer is



Jackson

fighting charges that he molested a boy in 2003. Jackson, who is free on \$3 million bail, has

pleaded not guilty to committing a lewd act upon a child, administering an intoxicating agent,

and conspiring to commit child abduction, false imprisonment and extortion. He is scheduled to face trial beginning Jan. 31.

"Years ago, I settled with certain individuals because I was concerned about my family and the media scrutiny that would have ensued if I fought the matter in court," he said.

"These people wanted to exploit my concern for children by threatening to destroy what I believe in and what I do. I have been a vulnerable target for those who want money."

Jackson was being investigated by Santa Barbara County authorities in 1993 when he reached a settlement with his accuser, paying him a sum reported at \$15 million to \$20 million. He was never charged in that case.

"Dateline NBC" reported that in 1990 Jackson allegedly made a \$2 million payment to the son of an employee at his Neverland Ranch. The boy was not the same one Jackson settled with in 1993, according to the report.

Former Santa Barbara County Sheriff Jim Thomas told "Dateline NBC" authorities learned of the 1990 case during their 1993 investigation.

'Pulp Fiction' prequel considered

VENICE, Italy (AP)—Pulp Fiction, the Prequel? John Travolta, who played hit man Vincent Vega in director Quentin Tarantino's blood-drenched 1994 film, said Tarantino has been considering another epi-

sode of the drama.

"Every six months he calls me to talk about a project on the story of the Vega brothers—a type of prequel to 'Pulp Fiction,'" he said in an interview, La Repubblica newspaper reported in

Friday's editions. "Then, it all remains in his mind."

Travolta is in town for the Venice Film Festival to promote "A Love Song for Bobby Long," while Tarantino is a co-presenter in a retrospective of

Italian B-movies.

"The problem is that we worked together in tight times," Travolta said of the collaboration. "Now he makes films for millions of dollars. I don't know if I'd still be OK for him."



R.E.M.

R.E.M. helping to raise money for Sudanese

LONDON (AP)—A new album featuring exclusive tracks from Ash, R.E.M. and David Gray has been released to raise money for the hundreds of thousands of people who have been driven from their homes in Sudan's Darfur region.

Badly Drawn Boy, Futureheads and Faithless also are featured on the 14-track album, "Songs for Sudan," being launched for Oxfam's Sudan appeal. "By buying this album you can help Oxfam save lives," a spokesman for the relief agency said Friday.

Arab militias known as the Janjaweed are blamed for

violence that has killed up to 30,000 people and forced more than 1.2 million to flee their homes in the large Darfur region of western Sudan.

The Sudanese government is accused of backing the Janjaweed to put down black African rebel groups that took up arms against the government in February 2003.

Khartoum denies backing the militiamen.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called for an expanded international force to help decrease the level of violence and enhance the pro-

tection of civilians in Darfur.

Food and medicine are desperately needed in 147 refugee camps scattered across a region the size of France.

All artists and record labels donating tracks to the album are forgoing their royalties. The album sells for \$14.32, of which \$8.96 will go directly to the appeal. The donation from each album sale could be used to provide 15 refugees with clean drinking water, Oxfam said.

The album can be bought at record stores in England or downloaded from the Oxfam Web site.

Peter Fonda to receive Gary Cooper Award

BOZEMAN, Mont. (AP)—Actor, director and Montana resident Peter Fonda will receive the first Gary Cooper Spirit of Montana Award, according to the fledgling film festival giving out the award.

Jeff Bridges will present the award from the Hatch Audiovisual Arts Festival, scheduled for Sept. 9-12. Like Fonda, Bridges has a home in Montana's Paradise Valley.

Penny Ronning, the festival's chairwoman, told the Livingston Enterprise the award honors Fonda's contribution to film and the arts and his ties to Montana.

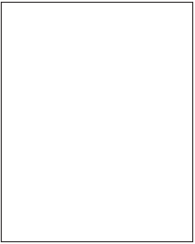
Fonda said he was honored to receive an award named for Cooper, who he knew through his father, Henry Fonda.

"He was a great Westerner—his bearing, everything about him," Fonda said of Cooper. "When I found out he was from Montana, I thought 'Well, that's why.'"

Pastimes



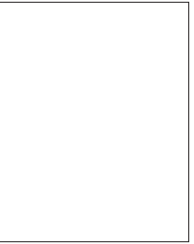




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